

Mentor Guide for Youth Registered Apprenticeship Programs

Youth Apprenticeship Intermediary Project

Stephen F. Hamilton

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

with Zach Boren, Bhavani Arabandi, and Tamar Jacoby

June 2021

Registered Apprenticeship¹ for young people is an earn-and-learn program for women and men in their late teens and early twenties. It combines academics with paid work experience across many sectors. An essential part of the apprenticeship experience is to be paired with a mentor, who supports and instructs the apprentice on the job. This mentor guide is for experienced workers who teach and advise youth apprentices at work. Ideally, mentors will receive training when they start, followed by continuing opportunities to learn and share with other mentors.

Apprenticeships are often seen as only for the trades (such as construction and electrical work). Although these apprenticeships are still thriving, recently, apprenticeships have expanded to emerging sectors such as information technology, health care, energy, and advanced manufacturing. Today more than 650,000 apprentices are active in the US. And at least 150,000 employers nationwide² have apprenticeship programs, including tech innovators like Google and Microsoft.³

In registered youth apprenticeships, young women and men gain expertise in a wide range of occupations, including in technical, administrative, and health care fields, among others. Employers can “grow their own” employees through apprenticeship programs, developing skilled workers who

contribute to the organization. Apprenticeships for young people are an excellent way to diversify the workforce because they engage those who learn best by doing and show their competence through what they can do, not exclusively with educational credentials. Apprentices from any gender, race, religion, ethnicity, or disability status are welcomed and nurtured. Learning at work is combined with instruction online or in a classroom, often for high school or college credit. An apprenticeship follows a specific program designed to develop the competencies required for the occupation. These competencies are set out in standards maintained by state or federal apprenticeship offices. Each apprentice's progress is assessed regularly. Upon successful completion, their competencies are formally certified by either the US Department of Labor or a State Apprenticeship Agency so that any employer may recognize what the apprentice knows and can do.

In addition to learning how to do the work for their specific occupation, apprentices learn competencies such as communication, problem solving, teamwork, and persistence that are valuable anywhere (also known as soft skills, employability skills, and essential skills). Mentors can explain the importance of these competencies and coach apprentices on them, but apprentices also learn them by observing their mentors and coworkers.

Apprenticeship encourages young people to remain in school and work hard by giving them a purpose for learning. It also provides a place for learning by doing that reinforces the lessons learned in the classroom. When apprentices use what they study in school at work, they become more engaged in learning and are more likely to retain the relevant knowledge and skill. Often, what they learn at work relates to school courses, such as math and writing. At an early age, apprentices gain a deep understanding of their occupation and the career paths open to them. They learn how to learn, which helps them adapt to future changes in technology and the economy. Employers who train apprentices are likely to offer them regular employment after they have finished because they have demonstrated their skills and work habits. Apprentices know what to expect if they accept the job offer, and they are more likely to stay because they feel comfortable and loyal.

Mentors can benefit from working with an apprentice in several ways. Taking responsibility for onboarding a new employee in a work organization is a way of developing and demonstrating managerial skills. Some employers think of it as informal management training. Most adults who have the chance to get to know and support a young person find it personally satisfying and a way to pass on some of their knowledge, skills, and wisdom to the next generation. Nearly everyone who teaches, in classrooms or elsewhere, finds that by doing so they learn, gaining even greater expertise. Although mentoring takes time away from productive work at first, mentors usually become more productive as their apprentices gain competence.

The next section of the mentor guide includes four modules. Each module has a list of important information, followed by frequently asked questions (FAQs):

- Module 1: What Is a Youth Apprentice, and What Is a Mentor?
- Module 2: Meet Your Apprentice
- Module 3: Teaching and Advising on the Job
- Module 4: Records, Regulations, and Support for Mentors

The guide concludes with a list of resources that mentors and employers might find useful when implementing a Registered Apprenticeship program.

Module 1. What Is a Youth Apprentice, and What Is a Mentor?

Youth apprentices are apprentices in every way. They are not in a junior version of apprenticeship. Their programs are registered with the federal or state apprenticeship office and lead to nationally recognized certification. Most youth apprentices are still enrolled in school and depend even more on their mentors than apprentices with more work experience. The quality of mentoring is critical to apprentices' learning and persistence in the program.

Youth Apprentice

A youth apprentice is a person between ages 16 and 24 who usually starts an apprenticeship late in or just after high school. On the job, a youth apprentice

- learns occupational competencies largely by watching a mentor and then doing tasks themselves as the mentor watches and gives feedback;
- learns more than how to do the work, but also how to be a worker in a professional setting;
- does real work while learning, in the role of both worker and learner; and
- earns wage increases as he or she builds competencies and becomes more productive.

Mentor

A mentor is responsible for teaching an apprentice on the job, where he or she

- continues to work productively while teaching;

- introduces the apprentice to coworkers and explains how the workplace runs, including informal norms and expectations as well as rules;
- advises the apprentice about work- and career-related issues; and
- helps the apprentice work through problems that may hinder their progress.

Module 1 FAQs

ISN'T APPRENTICESHIP JUST ANOTHER NAME FOR ON-THE-JOB TRAINING?

Learning on the job is certainly a key part of apprenticeship, but most on-the-job training (OJT) is informal, meaning it includes whatever the person doing the training thinks it should. Apprenticeships are more formal and structured. Apprenticeships teach competencies based on well-developed standards that professionals who know the occupation agree are necessary. Apprentices are accountable for showing they can perform the occupation's key job functions. Completing an apprenticeship results in a certificate of completion that is nationally recognized and portable, signaling the apprentice is fully qualified in the occupation.

WHAT DO APPRENTICES LEARN IN SCHOOL?

Most youth apprentices are still students. They continue to take classes on academic subjects that help them communicate, as well as other core subjects required for a high school diplomas and/or for college. Continued academic learning also helps them be informed citizens. As apprentices, they learn the principles behind what they are learning to do on the job. This background knowledge is relevant to mastering their occupation. In apprenticeship programs, the academic component is called "Related Technical Instruction" and is usually taught in career and technical education (CTE) classrooms in high schools or community colleges, online, and/or at the workplace.

WHY DO YOUTH APPRENTICES NEED A MENTOR?

Anyone starting a new job needs someone to show them the ropes. Even if they already know how to do the work, they need to know how things are done in their new workplace. But youth apprentices are just learning how to do the work and may not have had a job before. Some young people are focused, but others may need help figuring out things like when they can goof off and when they can't, how to accept criticism well, and why they need to show up for work on time every time. A mentor smooths the young person's transition from student to worker and, in the process, from adolescent to adult, taking greater responsibility and becoming more independent.

Module 2. Meet Your Apprentice

A mentor enters a personal relationship that endures for months or years. Getting off to a good start is important and takes some planning and effort. Try getting to know your apprentice and letting your apprentice know you so there's a solid basis for the relationship. Mentors have to care about their apprentices, and apprentices need to trust and respect their mentors. Sometimes the two can come to feel close, but the relationship can work well even when that doesn't happen. You don't have to like your apprentice, but you do need to be committed to helping them become the best worker they can be.

Understanding Your Apprentice

You and your apprentice are different, but you also have a lot in common—for example,

- interest in the industry or occupation,
- commitment to doing a good job,
- satisfaction from being part of a strong team, and
- wish to be respected and valued.

These form a sound basis for a trusting relationship, regardless of differences, such as

- age,
- race/ethnicity,
- religion,
- gender,
- disability status, and
- personality style.

Getting to Know Each Other

Mentors recognize and accommodate differences. Mentors also need to know their apprentices well, including their

- hopes,
- values,
- reasons for choosing this occupation and program,

- barriers they face at work and elsewhere, and
- plans for the future.

Apprentices should know their mentors well too:

- Take time to get acquainted.
- Talk about your own experiences and aspirations.

Youth apprentices are often adolescents. This means they

- can swing between childhood and adulthood;
- need extra guidance and instruction;
- are allowed to make mistakes as part of the learning process; and
- take increasing levels of responsibility and are treated as adult workers as they demonstrate increasing competence.

Orienting your Apprentice: Things to Talk about as You Get Started

Give your apprentice an overview of the training program, including

- how training will proceed,
- milestones,
- assessments, formal and informal,
- how to meet and exceed expectations, and
- incentives.

Give your apprentice an introduction to the workplace, including its

- organization and structure,
- formal rules, and
- unwritten rules.

Module 2 FAQs

WHAT DOES AN APPRENTICE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION?

This will vary depending on the size of your organization. A small one will be pretty simple; it's easy to see who's in charge of what and where you go for which purposes. But a large organization might be complicated and hard for a newcomer to understand. Where do you go if there's a problem with a paycheck or concern about how other people are treating you? Is there an HR (human resources or personnel) department, or do you go to the manager? Does the manager or shift supervisor keep tabs on everything or rely on HR for operations? Your apprentice should be able to get around easily and feel comfortable.

WHAT ARE UNWRITTEN RULES?

Along with the formal rules, like safety and work hours, every organization has ways of doing things that aren't written down anywhere. Are break times strictly limited, or is it okay to take a couple of extra minutes to finish your coffee or check in with a friend while on the clock? Are some workers especially highly respected, whose advice and judgment are more important than others? Is it okay to ask to borrow a tool or supplies from anyone?

ISN'T ALL THIS "GETTING TO KNOW YOU" WASTING TIME WHEN YOU SHOULD BE WORKING?

There must be limits, of course, on when you talk about personal things and how much. But it's more than just "shooting the breeze." Apprenticeship depends on a personal relationship between someone who knows the occupation and someone who wants to learn. Building that relationship takes some time, and sharing personal information is a big part of it. You'll have time for this kind of talk when you first meet, during breaks and down times. And it's possible sometimes to carry on a conversation while you are focused on a job. Your work now includes training your apprentice, so time spent getting to know each other is work time too, within limits.

MY APPRENTICE AND I IDENTIFY DIFFERENTLY (GENDER, RACE/ETHNICITY, RELIGION, OR ANOTHER CHARACTERISTIC), AND NO ONE ELSE IN THE ORGANIZATION SHARES THEIR IDENTITY. HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY APPRENTICE?

It *may* be easier if you share similar demographics with your apprentice, but this is not essential for you to be helpful. You can be understanding and supportive even though their demographic characteristics, background, and experiences are different from yours. It's more important that you share some similar values and an interest in your occupation. Remember that your apprentice has chosen to learn what you know.

If your apprentice has trouble with other people at work because of personal or demographic differences, you can approach those people, carefully of course, and ask them to help you make the apprentice more comfortable. If that doesn't work, you should go to your manager. No employer wants their workplace to be hostile to anyone.

Module 3. Teaching and Advising on the Job

School teachers go through years of training. Mentors are expected to do a lot of things teachers do, and more, with a lot less preparation. Fortunately, many people with little or no formal training are very good at teaching and advising on the job. You've probably learned from some of them. This module offers some tips about how to teach and advise an apprentice who is working alongside you. You have a couple of important advantages over a classroom teacher. One is that you know how to do your job very well. Otherwise, your manager wouldn't have invited you to become a mentor. Another is that you're not standing in front of a classroom talking; you're continually doing what you want your apprentice to learn. You can show them how it's done and explain why it's done that way and give the apprentice the chance to try while you watch and give advice. For most people, that's a very natural way to teach and learn. Below are some tips for how to approach teaching and advising your apprentice.

Mentors Use Constructive Criticism and Questions

- Avoid harsh or excessive criticism, which discourages apprentices.
- Recognize that mistakes can be opportunities to learn.

Mentors Are Active Listeners and Teach Apprentices to Be Active Listeners Too

- Pay close attention and avoid distractions. Don't look at your phone.
- Don't interrupt.
- Hold criticism. Use it sparingly and look for the right times.
- When your apprentice talks, leave space for them to say more. Wait three seconds or so before asking a question or commenting.
- Encourage the apprentice to keep talking. Say things like "Then what happened?" or "Tell me more about that."
- Use body language: lean forward, maintain eye contact, nod, smile.

- Paraphrase or summarize what you think your apprentice said to make sure you're on the same page.
- Ask questions that can't be answered with yes or no. Ask follow-up questions.
- Hold your own story. Save it for after your apprentice has finished talking, and then tell it if it provides useful information and advice.

Apprentices Need to Gain Competencies

- Technical competence—knowledge and skills required to do the work at a high level, such as
 - » organizing and completing work tasks,
 - » meeting productivity and safety standards, and
 - » using tools and/or equipment properly.
- Personal competence—capacity to be a good worker and pursue a productive career, such as
 - » drive or initiative,
 - » self-confidence,
 - » learning how to learn, and
 - » career planning.
- Social competence—ability to fit into and contribute to a work organization, such as
 - » teamwork,
 - » communication, and
 - » following rules.
- Problem solving and critical thinking—ability to
 - » diagnose and resolve problems,
 - » cope with novel challenges,
 - » come up with new solutions, and
 - » test those solutions.

Mentors Teach Apprentices

Mentors Teach Apprentices in many ways:

- demonstrating how to do the work,
- explaining what they are doing and why,

- monitoring apprentices' work and giving constructive feedback,
- asking reflective questions, and
- engaging with their apprentices in joint problem solving.

Mentors Advise Apprentices

Mentors Advise Apprentices about

- work-related issues, such as
 - » coping with challenges at work and
 - » planning their career; as well as
- issues beyond the workplace that interfere with learning and work (if sufficient trust develops and the mentor is willing), such as
 - » family problems,
 - » peer relationships,
 - » financial concerns, and
 - » other personal matters.

Mentors Do Not Have to Act as Advisors on Issues Beyond the Workplace

- Mentors who do not feel comfortable acting as advisors on issues beyond the workplace should be prepared to say that to their apprentices
- If an apprentice brings up a very serious problem, the mentor should refer the apprentice to another source of advice and assistance (see next topic).

Mentors Know Where Their Apprentice Can Go for Help

- Mentors are not social workers or psychologists.
- If an issue arises that goes beyond a mentor's competence, the mentor should refer an apprentice to an organization that can help (e.g., professional/trade organization, school or support organization) or know who else can help (such as a manager or apprenticeship coordinator).

Mentors Communicate Effectively

Mentors Communicate Effectively with all involved parties:

- apprentices,
- parents/guardians,
- teachers, and
- people responsible for overseeing the program.

Module 3 FAQs

HOW ARE THE THINGS APPRENTICES NEED TO LEARN DIFFERENT FROM EACH OTHER?

Technical competence is about the “how-to’s” of an apprentice’s work—the routine tasks and following proper procedures and completing them quickly, safely, and precisely.

Problem solving and critical thinking mean the ability to solve hard problems that may involve multiple systems and finding other resources, such as manufacturers’ manuals, websites, and talking to supervisors and coworkers.

Personal competence is the ability to work hard, keep learning, and follow a rewarding path in life. It’s also the ability to know what you know and what you don’t know.

Social competence means being able to work cooperatively in an organization with coworkers and supervisors and relate well with customers.

I KNOW HOW PEOPLE, INCLUDING MYSELF, GET TO BE TECHNICALLY COMPETENT, BUT I’M NOT SURE WHERE THOSE OTHER WORK-RELATED SKILLS COME FROM. AREN’T SOME OF THEM JUST PART OF A PERSON’S PERSONALITY?

Some people are better at these “21st century competencies,” like critical thinking, communication, social skills, and collaboration, than others—perhaps because they learned them from a parent or family member. They probably didn’t learn a lot of them in school. But experience, especially with the guidance of a mentor, can have a big influence on an apprentice. You might say these are the truly “hard skills”—harder to learn than the technical ones and harder to teach. One great advantage to youth apprenticeship is that young people are still figuring out who they are and how to fit in. They are better able to adopt new ways of thinking and acting than most older people.

HOW DO I TEACH APPRENTICES SO THEY CAN LEARN WHAT I KNOW?

The basics of teaching on the job boil down to “show and tell.” You do something the apprentice needs to learn and tell them what you are doing while they watch, listen, and ask questions. Sometimes you start by telling them what you are going to do and then do it while they watch. Thinking out loud is a useful

habit. When you talk about what you are doing while you are doing it, the apprentice learns not only to mimic what you did, but also understands why you did it a certain way. The next step is to change places. The apprentice tries to do what you did while you watch and comment—adding information, correcting, and encouraging. Both you and the apprentice can then talk over what took place, reflecting on why some things went right and how some things could be done better.

Showing, telling, and reflecting work best for technical competence. Teaching personal and social competence is less about telling and more about having your apprentice try doing things with your guidance and encouragement, and then spending some time talking over what happened, what was good about it and not so good, and how the apprentice can improve next time. But you will also demonstrate social competence in your interactions with others in the shop. Talking about that is also helpful, including explaining why you did something and describing times when you have done well and times when you could have done better. You also might call attention to coworkers whose actions illustrate either personal, technical, and social competence or incompetence.

It's a challenge to teach problem solving and critical thinking. One method is to ask questions of your apprentice to encourage them to figure things out and explain them to you. Another is to ask your apprentice to help you with tasks you may not already know how to do. While working together on those problem tasks, you'll use the same ways you teach how to do routine tasks, but asking questions and thinking out loud are even more important. Remember, you're still teaching when you say, "I really don't know what to do now," then puzzle it out together, try some things, or look for more information or advice. Good teachers don't know everything.

HOW IS ADVISING DIFFERENT FROM TEACHING?

The two can overlap, but generally you teach things that are more clear-cut and might have a right answer or approach. Advising applies to things that aren't so clear, like how to deal with a rude coworker or an obnoxious customer. Advising isn't necessarily telling someone what to do but rather talking about the situation, what you've done in similar situations, offering different perspectives, and answering questions. You don't need all the answers to lend an ear to an apprentice's concerns and offer words of wisdom. In fact, it's often better not to start out thinking you have the answer because you'll listen more carefully and allow the apprentice to express themselves more fully and maybe even come to their own conclusions by talking about it to you.

I'M NOT A GUIDANCE COUNSELOR. HOW CAN I GIVE CAREER ADVICE?

You know a lot more about your occupation than any guidance counselor, and that's valuable to your apprentice. You don't need to think of yourself as a counselor; just talking about your own career path

will be informative, including your false starts and wrong turns as well as your good moves. You can also talk about how you learned what you know and how you feel about your choice.

WHY WOULD AN APPRENTICE ASK FOR MY ADVICE ABOUT THINGS OUTSIDE OF WORK?

You may begin to hear about nonwork issues because you're spending a lot of time together and your apprentice has come to respect your expertise and see you as a role model. Too few young people have close relationships with caring adults outside their families. As they become adults it's helpful for them to see, talk with, and get to know adults who aren't their parents or teachers. When a mentor and apprentice come to know and trust each other, the apprentice may share personal issues and even ask for advice about them.

HOW DO I DRAW THE LINE BETWEEN THINGS I GIVE ADVICE ABOUT AND THINGS I DON'T?

First, you need to know and follow your employer's guidelines and policies. Second, you need to be conscious of the difference in age. You may talk about things with your friends that aren't appropriate to talk about with your apprentice. Third, be conscious of maintaining appropriate professional and personal boundaries with your apprentice. If you are ever uncertain, talk with your manager and/or your apprentice's parents/guardians. Fourth, remember that your formal responsibilities stop with work-related issues. If you don't feel comfortable talking about other things, say so, gently and with understanding. If you are comfortable—and that feeling may change over time—feel free to talk with your apprentice like a young friend or relative, if you see them like that. Be aware of ways in which your situation and experiences are different. And make sure you don't get in over your head.

WHAT IF I FEEL OVERWHELMED BY AN APPRENTICE'S PROBLEM OR PERSONAL ISSUE?

It's okay to say that, to explain that your apprentice is asking about things you don't feel qualified or comfortable talking about. If it's a serious issue, you may be able to refer your apprentice to someone who can help (e.g., a local support or community organization). If you don't know, ask for advice. This can be tricky because you can't tell other people about your apprentice's personal problems. But you can ask the apprenticeship coordinator or HR manager where an unnamed young person can get help.

When your apprentice is under age 18, you are legally bound to inform the proper authorities if you learn of things like abuse or harassment—sexual or otherwise—whether it is alleged to have occurred at work, in school, at home, or elsewhere. Even for an older apprentice, you should take anything of this nature very seriously and not attempt to fix it on your own. The same goes if you learn your apprentice is involved in an illegal activity. If that should happen or anything equally serious, you should report it to your supervisor immediately.

WHY SHOULD I THINK OUT LOUD IN FRONT OF MY APPRENTICE?

Communication is at the heart of apprenticeship. One difference between a learner and an expert is that the expert not only knows more, but also sees and understands the situation differently. For example, an auto-maintenance apprentice may change a car's brake pads and see only the pads themselves while the expert knows how they are connected with the car's braking mechanism, steering, and electronics and how changes in any component or system affect the others. When the mentor talks about the work they are doing while they're doing it, they help their apprentice not only learn how to adjust the brakes or replace the pads, but also how those parts are connected to other parts of the vehicle, helping the apprentice become an expert.

Don't feel like you have to say it all right the first time. Try more than one way, and say it more than once. Ask questions to see whether your apprentice got it. Encourage your apprentice to ask questions and make comments.

WHAT DO I TALK ABOUT WITH PARENTS OR GUARDIANS?

Parents or guardians of apprentices younger than 18 need to know how the apprentice is doing too. And they need to know they can contact you to let you know about anything happening in the family that might affect the work and learning, such as an illness or death. This connection isn't required for apprentices 18 and older, but if an older apprentice is still living at home, their parents or guardians will appreciate it and might be able to help the apprentice succeed in the apprenticeship.

WHAT DO I NEED TO CONSIDER ABOUT THE APPRENTICE'S CLASSROOM LEARNING?

Because apprenticeship is a formal training program that involves learning both on the job and in the classroom, it's important for the mentor to know something about what is happening in the classroom and for the classroom teacher to know what the apprentice is doing at work. Some of this is conveyed in written reports, but sometimes a conversation, email, or text exchange helps too, especially if problems come up. It may be useful to see the list of courses the apprentice is taking and become familiar with their content, in case the apprentice has a question that arises from the classroom.

It's nice to coordinate on-the-job learning with classroom learning when possible, but the mentor and teacher can't always synchronize instruction with the apprentice's work experience. You will involve your apprentice in whatever work needs to be done, not only things they have studied in class. This may mean you have to explain some basics about a job you're working on, but you don't have to explain everything. An apprentice might understand a classroom lesson much better after doing some related work.

Module 4. Records, Regulations, and Support for Mentors

You might sometimes feel that becoming a mentor has burdened you with writing reports and paying attention to rules and regulations and otherwise worrying about things you could do without. If it begins to feel like too much, talk with your supervisor. There may be ways to reduce the load. But be patient. Remember that apprenticeship is not casual. It's organized, regulated, and documented to assure that apprentices learn everything they need to qualify for employment in their occupation. Maintaining the details of the apprenticeship supports your employer's credibility and assures any future employers that the apprentice has been properly trained. Below are the main ways to support your apprentice by keeping records and following regulations.

Mentors Assess, Record, and Report Apprentices' Progress

- The apprenticeship program sets the standards apprentices are expected to complete.
- Records back up the apprentice's permanent qualification as a skilled worker.
- Assessment includes day-to-day monitoring and feedback.
- More formal periodic progress reports mark milestones leading to certification.

Mentors Adhere to Apprenticeship Regulations

- Apprenticeship programs are designed to follow the laws and regulations that govern both apprenticeship and youth employment.
- Although apprenticeship programs are designed to comply with these regulations, mentors need some familiarity with them too:
 - » Turning age 18 makes a person an adult for the purposes of youth and adult labor laws.
 - » Apprentices who are age 16 or 17 are exempted from some US Department of Labor's Fair Labor Standards because they are participating in a Registered Apprenticeship program.
 - » It's good to be familiar with what an apprentice can and cannot do. You can find more at the [Department of Labor's Youth Rules website](#).⁴ Minor apprentices may still be subject to some limitations on child labor. For example, a minor youth apprentice may not use a patient hoist or drive a forklift; mentors' coworkers who are 18 or older can handle those tasks.

- » Safety is a critical part of all workers' training but even more important when minors are involved.

Mentors Keep Apprentices' Confidential Information Private

- Information about an apprentice's progress should be shared with the apprenticeship coordinator, parents/guardians, and teachers, but it should otherwise be considered confidential and not shared with coworkers or friends.
- Any personal information an apprentice reveals should not go anywhere else, with the exceptions noted.

Mentors Know Where to Get Help

Mentors who face situations that they don't feel prepared to handle should be able to turn to

- a supervisor,
- the Human Resources office,
- the apprenticeship coordinator, and/or
- the state or federal office of apprenticeship at www.apprenticeship.gov.

Mentors Are Obligated to Report Certain Information about Possible Harms

State laws on mandatory reporting vary, but mentors should report information regarding their apprentices about

- abuse or harassment,
- suicidal thoughts, and
- actions or plans that violate the law.

You should notify your apprentice if you have to inform someone else about personal information.

If you are unable to get help from any of the people or organizations listed under "Mentors Know Where to Get Help," here are other support services:

- For abuse or neglect, call or text the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-4ACHILD (1-800-422-4453).
- For harassment, contact a local school official or police officer.

- For suicidal thoughts, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255.
- For anything illegal, contact the local police.

Module 4 FAQs

WHY IS SO MUCH RECORDKEEPING AND REPORTING NEEDED?

What separates apprenticeship from informal on-the-job training is that it results in a nationally recognized [Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship](#).⁵ Apprenticeship trains professionals who have to meet the [standards](#)⁶ of their profession and then get certified so everyone can know they met those standards and are qualified to work independently, even more precisely than a diploma or degree indicates what a student learned. That can only happen because a system is in place that specifies what apprentices should learn, assesses that learning, and certifies it. Certification and the recordkeeping that backs it up also help your employer maintain good standing as a quality Registered Apprenticeship program with the state or federal government and can support their efforts to attract future talent to your organization. A mentor should not only understand how this works, but also be able to communicate about the apprentice's progress with those who are responsible for tracking, both for regular reporting and in case any questions come up.

WHO ELSE NEEDS TO SEE THE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRESS RECORDS?

Your assessments of your apprentice are an important part of the feedback they need. Periodic written assessments should be used as the basis for discussions with your apprentice about their progress and what comes next. If they are minors, or if they are younger than 21 but still living at home, their parents or guardians will want to know how their dependents are doing and whether they can do anything more to support their apprenticeships. Teachers and instructors should be kept up to date on the apprentice's progress and informed about any problems that come up, especially related to the connection between work and school. For example, if the apprentice doesn't really know something they have studied at school or if what they learned is out of date, you should let the teacher know so they can go over it again or revise what they are teaching. Your manager should also know how your apprentice is doing. And the apprentice's progress, especially his or her achievement of the standards, should be reported to and recorded by the apprenticeship program sponsor, whether that is your employer or another organization.

WHY ARE APPRENTICESHIP REGULATIONS AND STANDARDS SO IMPORTANT?

Because apprenticeship is a formal training program that has to meet set skill standards, it also has to proceed according to [governing regulations](#).⁷ In addition, some apprentices are minors, and even though they are legally allowed to do some things that other minors may be prohibited from doing, some

limitations still exist that have to be obeyed, both by you and your employer. You can find some of those limitations and exemptions in a [fact sheet⁸](#) from the US Department of Labor.

IF I'M DOING ALL THIS REPORTING, HOW CAN I KEEP INFORMATION PRIVATE?

Progress reports are only shared with those responsible for the program—the manager or apprenticeship coordinator—and with the apprentice, teachers and instructors, and parents or guardians. Confidentiality applies to others you might casually talk with and to personal information the apprentice chooses to share with you in the process of getting to know each other. Those conversations should remain private. The only exceptions are those you are obligated to report to local or federal authorities.

Resources

Mentors of youth apprentices can find rich resources, both local and national. Much information is available for people who organize and operate programs, including guidance on how to mentor. Unfortunately, nearly all information about mentoring is aimed at “social” mentoring, that is, mentoring to help young people cope with challenges such as school performance, parental absence, personal relationships, exposure to crime, and drug use. Some, but not all, of this can be helpful to mentors of apprentices. But very little information is available about how to teach and advise an apprentice on the job.

Some information in this guide comes from an older publication about youth apprenticeship that includes information on mentoring and coaching:

Hamilton, Mary Agnes, and Stephen F. Hamilton. 1997. *Learning Well at Work: Choices for Quality*. Washington, DC: National School-to-Work Office.

Many more resources are available on mentoring adults at work, and much of it is relevant to young people. The main differences are that youth apprentices are young and inexperienced, and the mentor (sometimes called a coach) has to teach them how to do the work. Adult mentoring is much more about how to advance in a workplace and career. The [Mentoring Program Handbook](#) from the California Department of Human Resources (2017) has some useful information about organizing a workplace mentoring program for adults and especially about mentoring:

“MENTOR” is a consortium of mentoring programs that has excellent resources of this kind, including a very detailed guide on how to design mentoring programs:

Elements of Effective Mentoring Practice: Research-Informed and Practitioner-Approved Best Practices for Creating and Sustaining Impactful Mentoring Relationships and Strong Program Services, 4th ed. Washington, DC: MENTOR.

A supplement to that guide addresses mentoring in workplaces. However, it is primarily about social mentoring programs in which a mentor and young person meet in the mentor's workplace, not about how to mentor an apprentice:

Workplace Mentoring: Supplement to the Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring. Washington, DC: MENTOR.

The National Mentoring Resource Center has many resources and topics on the benefits of effective mentoring: <https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/index.php> (accessed June 4, 2021).

The Boys and Girls Clubs of America has resources on mentoring and how to deal with community and safety issues: <https://www.bgca.org/> (accessed June 4, 2021).

Notes

- ¹ "Registered Apprenticeship Program," US Department of Labor (DOL), accessed June 4, 2021, <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/employers/registered-apprenticeship-program>.
- ² "Solutions for Industry," DOL, September 17, 2013, https://www.dol.gov/oa/pdf/ATR_General_Outreach.pdf.
- ³ "Apprenticeships," Google, accessed June 4, 2021, <https://buildyourfuture.withgoogle.com/programs/apprenticeships/>; "Microsoft Leap Apprenticeship Program," Microsoft, June 4, 2021, <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/leap/>.
- ⁴ "Non-Agricultural Jobs - 16-17," DOL, accessed June 4, 2021, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/youthrules/young-workers/non-ag-16-17>.
- ⁵ "Registered Apprenticeship Program: Help," US Department of Labor (DOL), accessed June 4, 2021, <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/help/registered-apprenticeship-program#top>.
- ⁶ "Standards of Apprenticeship," 73 Fed. Reg. 64425 (Oct 29, 2008), as amended at 81 Fed. Reg. 92107 (Dec. 19, 2016), 29 CFR § 29.5, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/29/29.5>.
- ⁷ "Labor Standards for the Registration of Apprenticeship Programs," 73 Fed. Reg. 64425 (Oct 29, 2008), 29 CFR § 29, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/29/part-29>.
- ⁸ "Child Labor Provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) for Nonagricultural Occupations," DOL Wage and Hour Division, updated December 19, 2017, <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WHD/legacy/files/whdfs43.pdf>.

Acknowledgments

This research was funded by the US Department of Labor. We are grateful to them and to all our funders, who make it possible for Urban to advance its mission.

The views expressed are those of Stephen F. Hamilton and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders. Funders do not determine research findings or the insights and recommendations of Urban experts. Further information on the Urban Institute's funding principles is available at urban.org/fundingprinciples.



500 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, DC 20024

www.urban.org

ABOUT THE URBAN INSTITUTE

The nonprofit Urban Institute is a leading research organization dedicated to developing evidence-based insights that improve people's lives and strengthen communities. For 50 years, Urban has been the trusted source for rigorous analysis of complex social and economic issues; strategic advice to policymakers, philanthropists, and practitioners; and new, promising ideas that expand opportunities for all. Our work inspires effective decisions that advance fairness and enhance the well-being of people and places.

Copyright © June 2021. Urban Institute. Permission is granted for reproduction of this file, with attribution to the Urban Institute.